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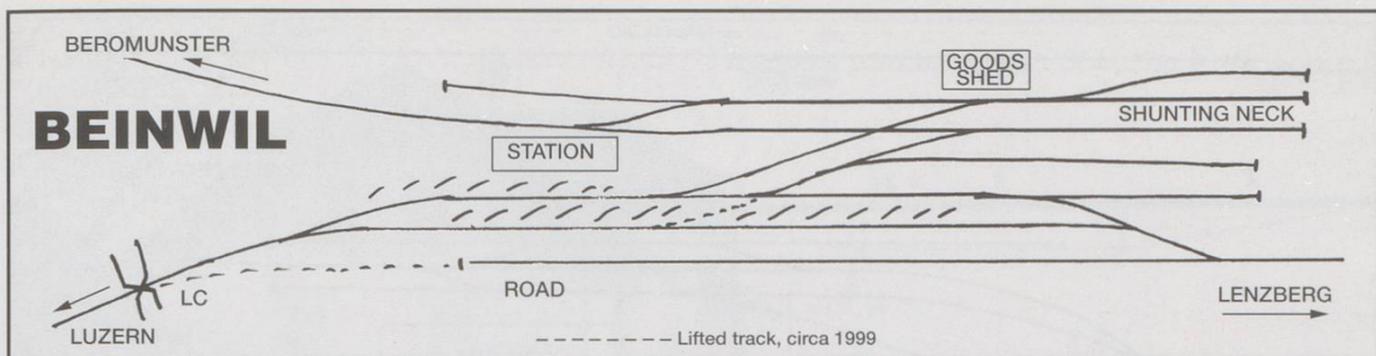
*Beinwil in August 1997. LH line was the branch platform. Wagons from the branch are stored in the centre road. Nowadays the RH loop is a truncated siding and wagons are left there, and the further centre road is the main line. A PTT Setra 315 awaits Beromünster passengers from the connecting train. All photos in the article are by Ernie Brack.*

A favourite subject for modellers of Swiss railways is the good old branch line terminus, however those looking for a typical SBB terminus to base their layout on do not have much choice. This is probably due to the multiplicity of lines, which form a fairly dense inter-connected network, and also to the more remote and country districts being served by the independent standard and narrow gauge companies. Only two termini could be classed as small stations and with the recent demise of Beromünster only Niederweningen remains and appears to have a secure future. Beromünster was the terminus of a branch of the Seetalbahn a mainly roadside tramway which became part of the SBB on 1 Jan 1922. The Seetalbahn main line eventually ran from Emmenbrücke to Wildegg, the first section from Emmenbrücke to Beinwil opening on 3 September 1883, followed by Beinwil to Lenzburg on 15 October 1883 and finally Lenzburg Spitzkehre to Wildegg on 1 October 1895. With the Editors permission a further article will cover this line in due course.

The first section of the Beromünster line from Beinwil to Menziken opened on 23 January 1887, however the extension to Beromünster was not completed until 1

October 1906. The branch was electrified in 1910 originally at 5500V/25 Hz. This was converted to the standard 15kV/162/3 Hz by the SBB in 1930.

The branch leaves the main line at Beinwil am See climbs steeply and then drops down into the Wyna valley and passes through the thriving towns of Reinach (3.17km) and Menziken (4.25km). The line then climbs through rolling hills to the terminus (8.02km), a small village of some 400 people. There are several industries in Reinach and Menziken, however the towns are also served by a branch of the narrow gauge WSB linking them direct to Aarau the largest town in the area. The Beromünster line goes in the wrong direction and it is remarkable that the passenger service lasted as long as it did (until May 1992). Nowadays a replacement bus service connects with the hourly Lenzburg-Luzern service at Beinwil and is surprisingly well patronised. Goods services continued to Beromünster into 1999 when plans came to fruition to remove the WSB from the middle of the main road onto the standard gauge track bed between Reinach and Menziken. By this time only the odd wagon each week was being received at Beromünster, little or nothing at Menziken, but anything up to four wagons



daily at Reinach, mainly steel wire and tanks of chemicals. A visit in April 2000 revealed that this traffic is still being handled but that little progress had been made in diverting the narrow gauge. It will be interesting to see if the standard gauge connection is maintained from Beinwil to Reinach once the narrow gauge is moved.

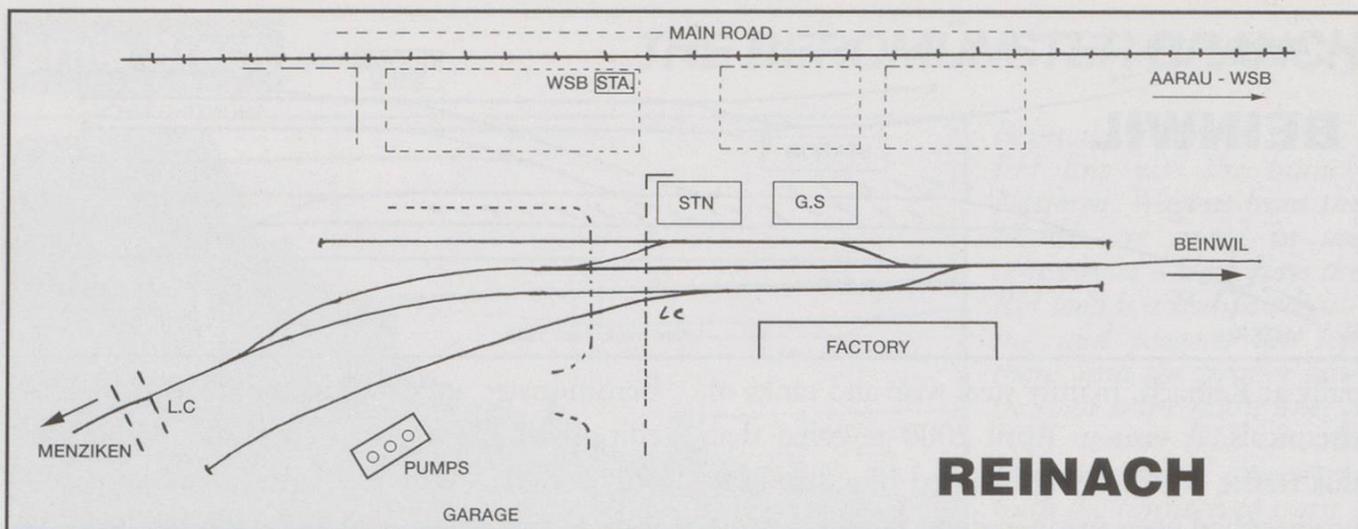
Track Plans for the branch stations are appended and are basically the usual Swiss style of loops and spurs; Beinwil however is something else! The passenger trains used to start from the front of the station building alongside the main tracks, and proceed into a shunting neck before reversing up the branch, initially on a fairly steep grade, behind the station building. Operations were simplified in the latter days of the service by the use of a push-pull trailer with a rebuilt De 4/4. Goods trains however still had (and have) a few shunting manoeuvres to accomplish. Building plans for

Beromünster appeared in the 02 (April) 1989 edition of *Eisenbahn Zeitschrift*. Although I only travelled as far as Menziken in April 2000 it does not appear as if any track has been lifted or buildings demolished. The Swiss do not appear to hurry when something is closed, whilst track has been lifted at the Emmenbrücke end of the Seetalbahn when the deviation was completed, that from Wildegg to Lenzburg Industrie closed in June 1984, is still in situ complete with a lightweight first class coach on a siding surrounded by trees at Niederlenz. The station kiosks at Reinach and Lenzburg Stadt also remain open although passenger services have long since ceased.

Train Services were initially worked by a series of 0-6-0 and 2-6-0 tank engines and under

*Reinach station looking towards Beinwil, the station kiosk is still open as is noted in the text above.*



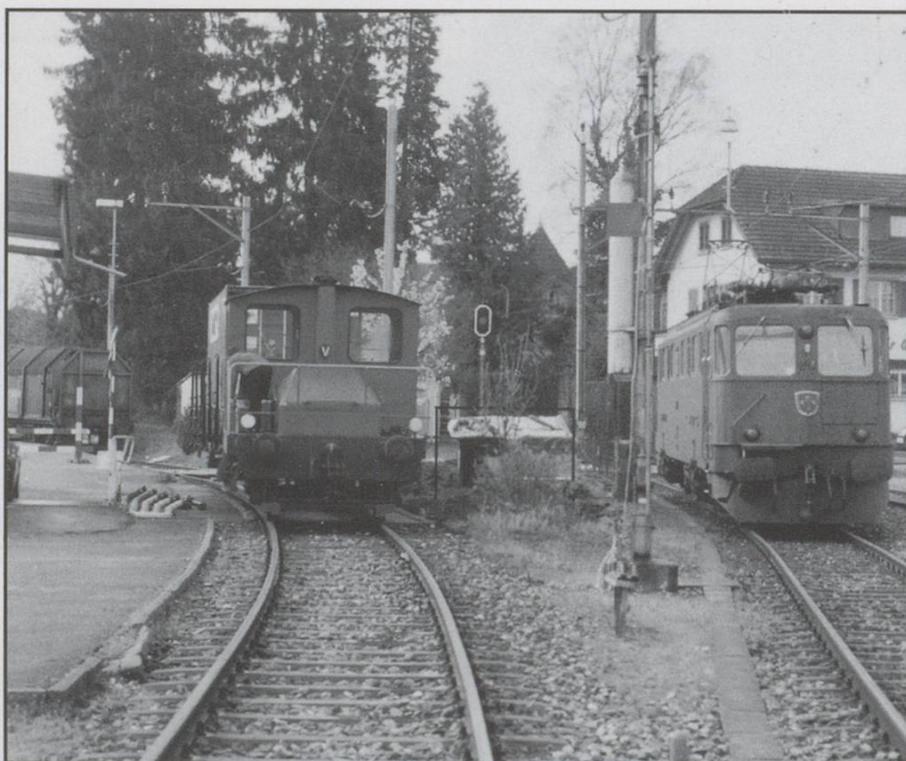


the original STB electrification by Bce 4/4 and Fe4/4 railcars. In 1926 the SBB introduced 3 baby crocodiles which had dual voltage capability built in although this could only be altered in works and was done in 1930. They survived until the 1980s (one is preserved at Balsthal). In later years SBB De 4/4 Triebwagen worked most services and 11 were later rebuilt (nos 1661-1671) and modernised. On my first visit in May 1988 these were still in charge of the passenger services while most freight trains were being handled by Class Ae 6/6. The surviving service to Reinach is invariably powered by one of these. The freight train ran in the early morning and loaded wagons left at Reinach on the way up the branch were speedily emptied and picked up by the locomotive on its way back from Beromünster; or if there was no traffic for the terminus (and nowadays) the locomotive waited at Reinach until the wagons were unloaded and took them back to Beinwil. Therefore unless the freight train was observed it was difficult to gauge the amount of traffic on offer. A tractor is kept at Reinach and had to be used this year as the electric supply

to the siding had been cut off. In 1988 2 tractors were observed at Menziken and some freight was on offer. PTT vans also served both Beromünster and Menziken and were handled by the push-pull train. After withdrawal of the De 4/4, class Rbe 4/4 railcars with specially painted ends to improve visibility, covered services for the last 3-4 years.

A Preservation Society stored various items of rolling stock in recent years in Beromünster Loco shed and appears to have ran the odd special train, it may not therefore be the end for this tip of the branch and it will be interesting to return in due course to view the result of the gauge conversion. In any event a visit to the branch should prove interesting to the railway

*Reinach in April 2000. The tractor is being refueled from a drum and an Ae 6/6 waits for the coil wagon to be unloaded.*



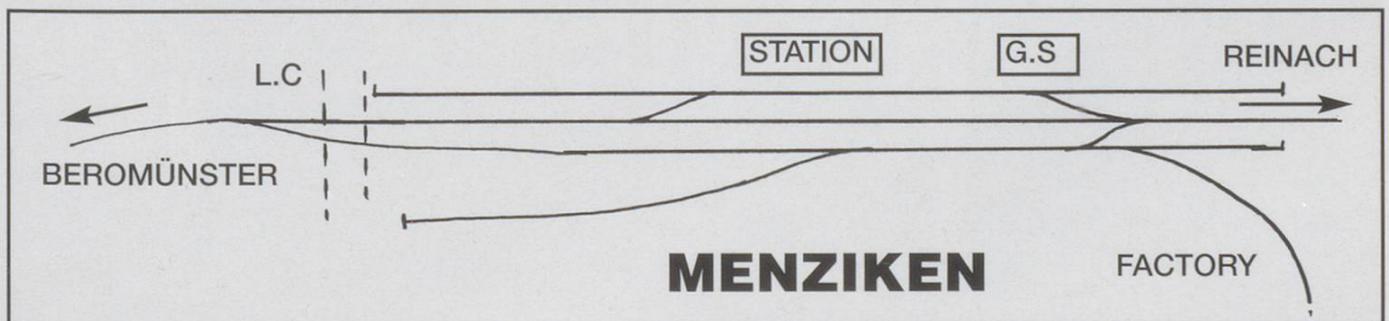


*Menziken station, April 2000, track still in situ.*

enthusiast. I would suggest travelling from Luzern to Beinwil by SBB; this will give you a few minutes to explore the station as the bus awaits the train from Lenzburg and the two Seetalbahn trains cross at Birrwil the next station in The Lenzburg direction. Take the bus to Beromünster; this terminates at the station and you will have just a few minutes to dash around

the premises (usually to the amusement of the bus driver). Rejoin the bus and alight at Menziken SBB. After checking this station out take the footpath next to the goods shed, which

*Menziken in May 1988. An Ae 6/6 light engine has arrived from Beromünster. It picked the two vans on the left and departed for Beinwil. Note also the PTT van in the siding.*



will lead you down to the WSB station. There is usually a steeple cab type tractor here although I have never witnessed any moving goods traffic. Reinach is about 10 minutes walk down the main road and the SBB station is down a side street on the right-hand side. After viewing the SBB station you can either wait for the next bus back to Beinwil (the bus stops by the goods shed) or use the WSB (trains every 30 minutes) to Aarau.

*On the right, Beromünster in 5/88. A goods train with PTT vans split apart in order that passengers can alight from the train arriving. Below: Also in 5/88 a general picture from the buffer stops showing a then busy goods yard.*

